

***** T O P S E C R E T *****S COPY

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FM THE SITUATION ROOM

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TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

DELIVER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

WH41309

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

TOHAK 175

TO: HENRY A. KISSINGER
FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT

LAST NOVEMBER IN THE WSAG YOU DIRECTED THAT JCS PLAN FOR AND CONDUCT SR-71 FLIGHTS OVER NORTH VIETNAM AT TEN-DAY INTERVALS. THIS WAS DONE, OF COURSE, IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTINUING INFILTRATION AND THE CONCERN WIDELY FELT THEN THAT THE NVA MIGHT BE PLANNING EARLY MAJOR OFFENSIVE ACTION IN THE SOUTH. THE SR-71 FLIGHTS WERE VISUALIZED AS WARNINGS AGAINST A NVA OFFENSIVE.

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THE LAST FLIGHT WAS ON MARCH 28. BEFORE THAT A FLIGHT COVERED LAOS ON MARCH 2. THESE WERE THE ONLY FLIGHTS THIS YEAR. THE FREQUENCY HAS BEEN LIMITED PRINCIPALLY BY WEATHER CONDITIONS, HOWEVER, NOT BY INTENT TO HOLD DOWN NUMBERS. DEFENSE NOW PLANS A FLIGHT TOMORROW IF WEATHER PERMITS.

DEFENSE REQUESTED AND OBTAINED PERMISSION FROM YOU FOR THE MARCH 28 FLIGHT. I WAS FRANKLY UNAWARE THEY HAD BEEN FLYING UNDER A BLANKET AUTHORITY WHICH THEY FELT DID NOT REQUIRE APPROVAL FROM YOU OR EVEN NOTIFICATION.

I QUESTION WHETHER THIS BLANKET AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT FLIGHTS APPROXIMATELY EVERY TEN DAYS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO STAND. I THINK IT PREFERABLE THAT DEFENSE, JCS, AND CIA PROPOSE A FLIGHT WHENEVER THEY BELIEVE CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT ONE. OTHERWISE THE FLIGHTS CAN CONTINUE AND WE MAY HEAR ABOUT THEM ONLY AFTER THE FACT. THIS COULD RESULT IN SOME UNSCHEDULED EMBARRASMENTS. IF YOU CONCUR, I WILL TELL DEFENSE AND CIA TO OBTAIN PRIOR APPROVAL FOR EACH SR-71 FLIGHT.

JCS, OSD reviews
completed.

WARM REGARDS.

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*****WSHR COMMENT*****

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